



thisweek

Readings & signings on LI

Monday

East Patchogue resident **Cindi Sansone-Braff**, author of "Grant Me a Higher Love" (Book-Surge Publishing), discusses how to write a successful self-help book. Registration required, \$20. At 11 a.m., Heckscher Museum of Art, 2 Prime Ave., Huntington; 631-351-3250, heckscher.org



Wednesday

Registered dietician **Amy Newman Shapiro** speaks about her new book, "Lose It for the Last Time" (Snewman Media). At 7 p.m., Book Revue, 313 New York Ave., Huntington; 631-271-1442, bookrevue.com



Jericho author **Ellen Meister** signs copies of her novel "Farewell, Dorothy Parker" (Putnam). At 7 p.m., Levittown



Library, 1 Bluegrass Lane, Levittown; 516-731-5728, nassaulibrary.org/levtown

Friday

Michael Goodwin discusses his graphic novel "Economix: How Our Economy Works (and Doesn't Work), in Words and Pictures" (Abrams ComicArts). At noon, Port Washington Library, 1 Library Dr., Port Washington; 516-883-4400, pwpl.org



Saturday

Artist **Eric Fischl**, who lives in Sag Harbor, signs copies of "Bad Boy: My Life On and Off the Canvas" (Crown). At 7 p.m., BookHampton, 16 Hampton Rd., Southampton; 631-283-0270, bookhampton.com



reviews

1967's a trip for 'Easy' Rawlins

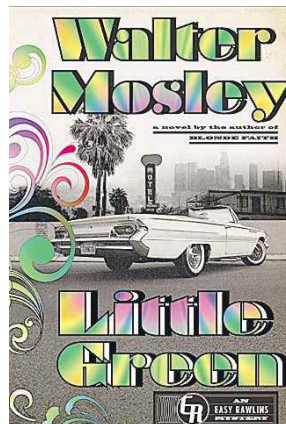
LITTLE GREEN: An Easy Rawlins Mystery, by Walter Mosley. Doubleday, 291 pp., \$25.95.

BY GENE SEYMOUR
Special to Newsday

When we last left Ezekiel "Easy" Rawlins, he had fallen off the wagon and driven his car over a cliff. This is nothing new for literary detectives. Sherlock Holmes once took what seemed a fatal fall off the Swiss Alps into the Reichenbach Falls.

Holmes came back. So has Easy, who was introduced to readers 22 years ago with "Devil in a Blue Dress," an explosive noir mystery set in post-World War II Los Angeles. That book set off one of the best series in the genre of "hard-boiled private eye" fiction — one that is also a steadily enlightening portrait of social and cultural mores of mid-20th century Southern California.

Eleven Easy Rawlins books followed, along with about 20



Walter Mosley's detective comes back from the brink.

other books. Mosley's teeming brain has yielded so many wonders, one wouldn't have blamed him if he'd decided to end things with the franchise that started it all.

But I suppose neither he nor we would have forgiven such a calamity. And besides, Easy's life story is stuck in 1967, still close to the proverbial dawn of the Age of Aquarius. And though by now in his late 40s with all these fresh



PHOTO BY MARCIA WILSON

dings, creaks and scars from his near-death experience (along with the lingering aftereffects of the broken heart that started his fateful binge), Easy seems up for anything the new age has to offer — even a request from his sociopath sidekick Raymond "Mouse" Alexander to find the missing son of a woman who hates his guts. The young man, nicknamed "Little Green," was last seen

dropping acid somewhere around Sunset Boulevard. As if that were any weirder than anything Rawlins had to deal with before. And where else would a homicidal low-life like Mouse go to for help? "You read a man's face like a little kid readin' Dick and Jane," Mouse tells Easy.

So off Easy goes, hassled by white thugs in and out of police uniform, underestimated by the well-heeled, drug-addled and bottom-feeding alike, and fueled by some mysterious black potion labeled "Gator's Blood" that bolsters his battered senses. This hoodoo riff adds a somewhat serio-comic element to this installment of the Rawlins saga, culminating in a denouement that would be ludicrous if it weren't for Mosley's elegant storytelling and his main character's composure.

If you know Mosley, you know Easy's euphoria over surviving his mishap won't last. In the years to come, his world's got assassinations, earthquakes, crack, Crips, Bloods and the Rodney King mess in store. Hard on Easy; thrilling for the rest of us.

Sarah and the Soviets

YOU ARE ONE OF THEM, by Elliott Holt. The Penguin Press, 293 pp., \$26.95.

BY MARION WINK
Special to Newsday

In 1982, an American girl named Samantha Smith wrote a letter to Yuri Andropov, pleading for peace. This led to her being invited by the Soviet leader to visit the U.S.S.R. The media coverage of her trip was closely monitored by then-8-year-old Elliott Holt, growing up in Cold War-era Washington.

Holt apparently has been thinking about this incident ever since, as it forms the basis for her debut novel, "You Are One of Them," a genre-bending story of female friendship with a macho

streak of spy-novel intrigue.

Holt's narrator is Sarah Zuckerman, a girl damaged by her younger sister's death and her parents' divorce, and further hamstrung by her mother's anxiety issues. Then, fortune delivers a fresh-faced new neighbor, Jennifer Jones. "I'd never had a best friend," Sarah explains, "but I didn't tell Jenny that. I didn't tell her that until she came along, I'd never felt like I belonged anywhere."

As her mother and the media obsess over images of nuclear disaster and intimations of war, Sarah writes a letter to Andropov. Jenny says she'll write one, too. A few months later, The Washington Post calls the Jones' house; Jenny's letter has been published in Pravda. Andropov writes her back: "The Soviet people are for friend-

ship and peace." Soon Jenny is an international celebrity, on her way to the U.S.S.R. with her family.

To Sarah's bewilderment and despair, there is never any mention of her letter.

The plot from there is tricky. Suffice it to say that after the Joneses return, the girls' friendship is never the same, and later the whole family is killed in a plane crash. Sarah is overwhelmed by confusion and loss.

Ten years later, she receives a letter from Russia suggesting that Jenny may be alive. The second half of the book takes place in Moscow, where Svetlana, the author of the letter, was Jenny's designated "friend" during the 1983 publicity trip. Though she invited Sarah to come learn the truth, she is now evasive. "You Americans love truth,"



Author Elliott Holt

she tells Sarah derisively. "You want the truth, and you ask for it like eggs you order for breakfast. Today I want my truth sunny side up! And tomorrow hard-boiled."

To unscramble the truth takes Sarah longer than she expected, but her months in the frozen city with its endless drinking, smoking and cynicism make for a quick read. The ambiguous resolution won't satisfy all readers, but it is true to Holt's theme: There are things, and people, we can never absolutely know.